



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653

mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

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SPRING TROUT FISHING

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Randy Mack knows how to draw a crowd. With a bucket full of fish, he’s the most popular guy on the trout stream.

More than 100 anglers were waiting for him, as Iowa’s spring trout stocking got underway April 1. A few dozen might have been muttering ‘April Fools,’ when Mack did not hit Bailey’s Ford until midmorning. Just a couple miles from the Manchester hatchery, it’s usually the *first* stop. But 45 of them brightened up, as Mack stocked 300 glistening brook and brown trout along the half-mile or so stretch.

“It was a good crowd for as chilly as it was,” observed Mack. “It was kind of cool and overcast, so there were not as many people.” Another 63 fishing fans shook off the cold at Richmond Spring, in Backbone State Park near Strawberry Point, at his first stop. About 400 trout went in there. Crews from Department of Natural Resources hatcheries at Decorah and Big Spring, near Elkader, have been busy, too, in the first days of stocking.

There *are* holdover fish through the winter in over 50 northeast Iowa streams. Most anglers, though, keep an eye on the stocking schedules as they make travel plans to from Iowa City, Waterloo and communities across Iowa to the coldwater creeks that make up 'Trout Country' in nine northeast counties. Each year, about 30,000 anglers pay another \$11 for the trout fee, that offsets the costs of raising the scrappy, shimmering game fish. The DNR will stock about 325,000 catchable sized rainbow, brown and brook trout this year. Most of the anglers lining the banks will be targeting those 10 to 12 inch, half pounders...as well as the occasional three to five pound brood fish that find their way into the trucks.

Other anglers prefer to dial up the degree of difficulty—and avoid the crowds. About a dozen streams receive unannounced stockings; the same fish, but without the regularity of a schedule. They might be casting for fish that have been in the water for a day, a week or more, after the dumb ones have been caught. Taking it up another notch, are Iowa's 'put and grow' streams. There, fingerling brown and brook trout are stocked, to grow up wild. Very few five-fish limits go home from them.

As the stocking trucks rumbled through their first stops, though, a lot of the fish were angler-friendly. "I've caught three so far," responded Greg Edwards, about 45 minutes after the fish hit the water. He fishes about every Saturday through the stocking season. On this day, 'Powerbait' was working. "It seems like the red, white and blue work better (today). Normally, the yellow works better."

Around him, success was mixed. An angler 15 or 20 yards downstream from Edwards hooked and creeled three nice looking fish in a half-hour. Nearby, one was hooked before Mack had even stepped out of the stream. Upstream, Carol Tuttle had one brook trout and was switching lures. "I have a white fly on now. Just a hunch," said Tuttle. She also prowls the streams about once a week. "Just to relax. It takes lots of patience. Sometimes hours," she laughed.

Early Season Trout? Factor in the 'Cool'

Early season trout fishing requires a few adjustments, if you want to feel that familiar tug. "Our water at the hatchery is about 50 degrees year round. When we get down here this time of year, the water temperature in the streams is in the low 40s," reminds Randy Mack of the DNR's Manchester hatchery. "Those just-stocked trout take while to acclimate to that colder water. Once they do, they should become active and hit your lures a little better."

As he stocks five to 12 holes on each of the streams, Mack talks with the people fishing. What are they using? What's worked before? On the chilly, overcast day we were there, his suggestion was 'white to bite'. "They're catching fish on little white twister tails. Power bait normally works, but right now it's cold enough that the fish are not aggressive. The twisters and tube jigs are working."

Mack also suggests going really small with those twister tails; or even clipping a bit off the tail. "Trout will clamp down from behind. They might give it a tug, but not even get over the hook, especially in colder water temps," he offered. "It also helps to change colors or types of bait or lures. You might catch one or two on one bait, then change to something else when they stop chasing that."

A lot of trout anglers use light, two to four pound test line for trout. As sight feeders, trout will shy away from thicker line moving through the water. "It pays to have a flexible rod, too", suggests Mack. "Trout are such tremendous fighters that you need something that'll bend, especially in the tip. That's how fly rods are designed. They have bend through the entire length. You don't lose as many fish as with a stiff rod."

Trout Info

For updates on northeast Iowa trout stocking information, call 563-927-5736. The stocking schedule is also on line at www.iowadnr.com Click on 'Fish and Fishing,' then 'trout stocking.' From there, you can even zero in on individual streams.

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PROPOSALS TO WILDLIFE RULES AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is accepting comments on a series of proposed changes to many hunting seasons and licenses on its website at www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/.

The proposed changes are subject to approval from the Natural Resource Commission. A public meeting to discuss the proposed rules is set for April 18 and will be carried over the Iowa Communications Network at 18 satellite sites across Iowa. The list and descriptions of proposed changes and meeting locations is on the Iowa Department of Natural Resources website www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/.

The DNR is proposing changes to the antlerless deer license quotas, including eliminating the antlerless licenses in 26 counties, primarily in northwest and north central Iowa. The DNR is also proposing to require hunters who bag a deer or wild turkey to call a phone number to report their harvest. Spring and fall turkey seasons would be included.

A proposed change to the landowner tenant free deer and turkey licenses would require landowners and tenants to pre-register before receiving the free licenses. Registration would be available at www.iowadnr.com or by calling a toll free number.

Proposed changes for the 2007 Spring turkey hunting season would remove the zones on the Iowa State Forests and allow Iowa residents to hunt statewide each season.

Other spring turkey hunting changes include changing the daily bag limit to one bearded turkey per license, which would only affect hunters in the fourth season, who have not yet bagged a turkey.

Lastly, the DNR is proposing a trapping season river otter and has a set of dates for waterfowl hunting seasons, which is subject to final approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in August.

Each comment has a limit of 500 characters, but there is no limit on the number of comments someone may submit on the DNR proposals.

###

IOWA COMMUNITY FORESTRY AWARD RECIPIENTS HONORED

DES MOINES — Celebrating tree species diversity and community tree enthusiasts, Iowa natural resources officials recognized outstanding community forestry representatives on March 30, in Des Moines. The 2006 Iowa Urban and Community Forestry Awards Luncheon honored individuals and groups for exceptional work planting, maintaining, and advocating for trees in Iowa communities.

“You are dedicated to planting trees and improving your communities and I want to applaud you for being here,” Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Director Jeff Vonk told the audience. “I’m thankful and I encourage you.”

This year’s ceremony emphasized the importance of diversity in tree species with the theme “Diversity is the Future.” Communities that rely too heavily on just a few species of trees can lose many of them due to insect or disease outbreaks, said DNR Urban Forester Randy Cook.

Citizen achievements in urban forestry were recognized with awards in five categories: Outstanding Volunteer, Outstanding Professional, Outstanding Organization, Outstanding Youth Project, and Outstanding Media Partner.

“This is a very nice recognition for all these people who have worked so hard and so selflessly for their communities,” said volunteer Mike Giudici, who directs the volunteer-driven Greenway Habitat project in Davenport. “We’re all trying to beautify our cities and improve quality of life.”

Vonk and DNR division administrator Ken Herring also presented “Tree City USA” awards to more than 130 communities. That designation, granted by the National Arbor Day Foundation, honors cities and towns for their commitments to all facets of community tree care and management.

“Tree Line USA” recognition went to Alliant Energy, MidAmerican Energy and Waverly Light & Power companies. With this award, the National Arbor Day Foundation honors utility companies for exceptional efforts on behalf of community trees.

Awards also went to three fifth grade artists competing at the state level in the 2006 National Arbor Day Poster Contest. The first place winner’s artwork will go on to the national competition.

Paul Wray, a retiring Iowa State University professor of Natural Resource Ecology and Management and Extension Forester, received a special Leadership Award in recognition of his three decades of service.

The awards luncheon occurred roughly four weeks before Arbor Day, which takes place April 28. A proclamation signed by Governor Tom Vilsack declared April 21-28 to be Arbor Week in Iowa.

Three Iowa energy companies – MidAmerican Energy, Alliant Energy, and Aquila –sponsored the event, along with the nonprofit group Trees Forever. The utility companies also donated door prizes to the luncheon, as did individuals and agencies associated with the Iowa Urban and Community Forestry Council.

Members of the Iowa Urban and Community Forestry Council organized the event, while the Telephone Pioneers, a group of retired Bell employees, underwrote Savings Bonds for the poster contest. The Iowa Urban and Community Forestry Program is a cooperative venture involving the Forestry Bureau of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the US Department of Agriculture, and other natural resources groups.

For more information, contact Randy Cook at (515) 281-5600 or at Randy.Cook@dnr.state.ia.us or Matt Brewer at (515) 242-6892 or at Matt.Brewer@dnr.state.ia.us. Digital photos are available. Send photo requests to Matt.Brewer@dnr.state.ia.us.

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DNR TO UNVEIL GARBAGE SCULPTURE BEFORE EARTH DAY

DES MOINES —The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will welcome a several hundred pounds trash-laden metal sculpture into its home office on April 21.

The public is invited to come see this unique, environmentally conscious artwork just before Earth Day. Officials will unveil it at 11 a.m. in the 2nd floor atrium of the

Wallace Building (502 E. 9 St., Des Moines). The sculpture depicts a giant water droplet, hollowed out so viewers can step inside its volume.

Artist David Williamson and DNR staff will be available until 2 p.m. to greet sculpture viewers and answer questions. The artwork will remain in the 2nd floor atrium.

The sculpture honors work done by DNR volunteers in the annual river cleanup called Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition). In this weeklong outdoor adventure, volunteers make a public stand for water quality by canoeing and cleaning Iowa waterways.

During last year's event, volunteers collected roughly 124-cubic-yards of trash from the Little Sioux River in northwest Iowa. Afterwards, at the Iowa State and Clay County Fairs, Williamson helped volunteers turn some of that garbage into artwork.

This artistic offshoot of Project AWARE (known as Riverse) began in 2004. That year, Williamson helped volunteers create "Fair Catch," a 10-foot-tall metal canoe paddle made from AWARE-collected garbage. "Fair Catch" now stands in the Wallace Building, where it will soon be joined by the new sculpture.

Riverse has also incorporated a collaborative written segment. Williamson collected fairgoers' thoughts about rivers and water and compiled them into poems. Last year, he produced "Clear" and crafted an additional poem called "Current" this year. Riverse will return for this summer's Project AWARE, which takes place June 17-24 on the Iowa and English Rivers. Visit www.iowaprojectaware.com for registration and other materials.

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us.

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EARTH DAY BRINGS PACKED PRAIRIE RESCUE WEEK

DES MOINES – A wave of volunteer events will sweep across Iowa next week, as Prairie Rescue 2006 enters Earth Day weekend. With one event planned for April 20 and 9 events set for April 22 (Earth Day), volunteers have plenty of chances to celebrate the holiday.

The events are part of the seventh annual Iowa Statewide Prairie Rescue; a series of volunteer efforts to revitalize Iowa's endangered prairie habitat. This year, the events also commemorate Aldo Leopold, who advocated public understanding and protection of the environment. April was recently named "Aldo Leopole Month," in honor of the Iowa-born naturalist.

At each of this year's roughly 25 events, volunteers will help care for a prairie site by removing invasive species, planting native seeds and assisting with other tasks. Upcoming events include:

- **Nine Eagles State Park, April 20, 9 a.m.**
- **Breen Prairie, April 22, 10 a.m.**
- **Cinder Path Prairie, April 22, 9 a.m.**
- **Kennedy Park, April 22, 6 p.m.**
- **Loess Ridge, April 22, 9 a.m.**
- **Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, April 22: Registrations required by April 8.**
- **Rock Creek State Park, April 22, 11 a.m.**
- **Stone State Park, April 22, 9 a.m.**
- **Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, April 22, 12 p.m.**
- **Waterman Prairie Area, 9 a.m.**

Visit www.iowadnr.com/volunteer/pr06.html for details about these and other upcoming events. Prairie rescues give volunteers the chance to protect what remains of Iowa's beautiful prairie habitat. Native grasslands once covered 70-percent of the state but has been reduced to 0.1-percent of their original size. The remnants now require assistance to survive.

For more information, contact Sarah West at Sarah.West@dnr.state.ia.us or at (515) 281- 6271 or Cathy Engstrom at cengstrom@inhf.org or at (515) 288-1846.

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Extended Snow Goose Hunting Season Closes April 15

DES MOINES – The special conservation order for light geese, including white and blue phase snow geese and Ross' geese, ends on April 15.

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DNR SPRING SALE SET FOR MAY 13

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR will hold a spring auction Saturday, May 13, at the Cattle Barn on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. The gates open at 8 a.m. and the auction will begin around 9 a.m. The public may view the items for sale on May 11 and 12, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

New this year is a 10 percent buyer's premium that will be added to all sales. The premium is the fee paid for the auctioneer. For example, if the winning bid is \$20, the buyer will pay a 10 percent premium, or \$2, added to the bid after taxes, so the payment would be \$20, plus 6 percent sales tax, \$1.20, plus the premium fee, \$2, or \$23.20.

Items up for auction include firearms, boats, outboard motors, chainsaws, mowers, trailers, farm and office equipment and more. The items are sold “as is” with no guarantee or warranty.

Any person interested in purchasing a firearm at the auction must have either a valid Iowa permit to acquire pistols or revolvers, a federal firearms license, or a professional or non-professional permit to carry concealed weapons. The Iowa permit to acquire can be obtained from a sheriff’s office. Allow two to three weeks to receive the permit.

Payment must be made on auction day. All sales are final. Firearms must be removed from the site within one half hour after the sale of the firearm is completed. All other items must be removed from the sale site after full payment is made.

Sales taxes will be collected. Boats, snowmobiles, trailers and vehicles will pay taxes to the proper county office when registering those items.

The Iowa DNR reserves the right to reject any bids and withdraw any item from the sale at any time. To receive a copy of the sale bill, send an email to susan.davenport@dnr.state.ia.us or a self addressed stamped envelop to Surplus Sale, Iowa DNR, 502 E. 9th St., Des Moines, IA 50319.

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CLEAR WATER FROM THE IOWA TO THE MISSISSIPPI: “AWARE 06”

DES MOINES – More than 200 volunteers will turn a summer vacation into an adventure during the fourth annual Project AWARE (A Watershed Awareness River Expedition).

Registrations are now being accepted for this weeklong river cleanup. This year, the event will bring volunteers to the Iowa and English rivers in southeast Iowa. The expedition will set out on June 17, from a site near Iowa City, arriving at the Mississippi River on June 24.

Along the way, participants will fish pop cans and plastic sacks from the water, wrench tires and barrels out of muddy embankments and spend their evenings learning about natural resources. Check www.iowaprojectaware.com for registration forms, schedule updates and more.

Volunteers can join the expedition for one day, the entire week or anywhere in between. The program provides canoes, free camping, low-cost meals and evening “infotainment” programs.

In addition, look for trash from this year’s project at the Iowa State Fair. An artist will help fairgoers turn some of that recovered garbage into a sculpture.

Since its first outing on the Maquoketa River in 2003, Project AWARE has brought volunteers to a different Iowa watershed every June. Making a public stand for water quality, the program lets everyday citizens make a difference — one stretch of river, one piece of trash at a time.

Project AWARE advocates a perspective based on the “watershed,” or the region of land draining into a body of water. As Project AWARE volunteers learn, much of the trash, chemicals and other materials used on the land will eventually end up in the water.

This year, in response to public demand, Project AWARE’s organizers are offering an additional service. Local groups wishing to put on cleanups can apply for CLEAR (Community Leaders Enhancing Area Rivers) mini-grants worth \$1,000. Find more information at www.iowater.net.

Two volunteer programs within the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) — IOWATER and the Keepers of the Land — work with numerous sponsors to organize AWARE.

For more information, contact Brandon Harland at (515) 281-3150 or at brandon.harland@dnr.state.ia.us.

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STILL TIME TO ORDER TREE AND SHRUB SEEDLINGS

AMES - There is still time to order affordable tree and shrub seedlings for spring planting projects.

“Whether your aim is to create wildlife habitat, improve water quality or to someday sell big timber, the State Forest Nursery still has a good supply seedlings available,” said Roger Jacob, manager of the state forest nursery for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

For Iowans who may just be getting started planting native trees and shrubs, the State Forest Nursery has a 20 tree and shrub Songbird packet for \$20 and four Wildlife packets of 200 trees and shrubs for \$90.

New this year, customers can create their own packet tailored to the specific wildlife species they wish to attract. The Create-A-Packet includes 50 seedlings each of 4 tree or shrub species of the customer’s choice.

For more information contact Roger Jacob at 515-233-1161 or roger.jacob@dnr.state.ia.us. To order seedlings contact the State Forest Nursery at 1-800-865-2477 or visit www.iowadnr.com/forestry/ for more information.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of April 11, 2006

www.iowadnr.com

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Northwest

Ice has recently gone out from area lakes. Concentrate in shallow water for best action for all species. Remember – there is a closed season on Walleye and Muskellunge on Spirit, West and East Okoboji Lakes.

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Fish for crappies under the docks at Templar Park with mini jigs or minnows, and at the North Grade close to the rocks on calm sunny days. The hot bullhead action using night crawlers at the North Grade should start soon. Look for smallmouth bass around the shallow rock piles. The action is best after a few sunny, warm days, and fishing should pick up.

West Okoboji Lake (Dickinson): Fish mini-jigs or minnows in the canals for bluegills and crappies.

East Okoboji Lake (Dickinson): Soon after ice out is traditionally the best time to fish channel catfish at East Okoboji, using traditional catfish baits on the bottom. Although the best action occurs at night, do not overlook the daytime bite.

Brushy Creek (Webster): The water temperature is 40 degrees in the back bays and all the docks are in. Anglers are catching a few miscellaneous of fish.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Walleye fishing is very good using twisters along the shoreline.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Yellow bass are starting to bit on crappie jigs. Fishing is good for channel catfish and bullheads.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Overall, water temperatures are still cold and fishing activity has been slow. Anglers have indicated generally slow fishing.

Don Williams (Boone): Few anglers are out. Some activity for crappie and bluegill, but overall fishing has been slow.

Hickory Grove (Story): Some crappie and bluegill fishing with worms and bobbers, although fishing is slow.

Big Creek (Polk): Crappie fishing has been slow to fair using jigs and minnows with the better areas near the dam and in the east arm of the lake.

Easter Lake (Polk): Crappie fishing has started using jigs and minnows. A few bluegills have been caught.

Below Saylorville Dam (Polk): White bass and walleye fishing have been fair to good using jigs and/or minnows. Some channel catfish are also reported below the reservoir.

Below Lake Red Rock (Marion): White bass and walleye fishing is fair using jigs in the tailwater area. Fishing has picked up for some nice sized channel catfish.

Ahquabi (Warren): Largemouth bass fishing has been fair, although most of the fish catch are below the legal length limit.

Green Valley (Union): Channel catfish are biting on shad bait in shallow warm coves. Some crappie can be caught from shore in warm areas on jigs and minnows.

Three Mile (Union): Channel catfish fishing is good using shad in the upper half of the lake in warm coves.

Wilson Lake (Taylor): Some bluegill and crappie can be caught from shore in 4 to 7 feet of water using night crawlers and minnows.

West Lenox (Taylor): Crappie can be caught from shore in 5 to 8 feet of water using small jigs

Icaria (Adams): Channel catfish up to 2 ½ pounds can be caught with shad in the shallows.

Binder Reservoir (Adams): Channel catfish up to 2 ½ pounds can be caught in the coves and the upper end using shad or night crawlers.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Anglers are catching walleyes in shallow areas on the south side using jigs. Crappie fishing has started at Boy Scout Island and canals on the west side. Largemouth bass are being picked up on the west side of lake.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Some crappies are starting to be picked up using jig and minnows, although fishing is slow yet.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: The Mississippi River Pool Stage at Muscatine is 10.56 feet and the water temperature is 50 degrees. The River is expected to rise over the next several days. Fishing continues to be fair for walleye and sauger in the tailwaters below the dams and wing dams on jigs and a few fish are also being picked up on crank baits. Fishing for channel catfish continues to be fair to good in the mouths of incoming streams and rivers, around the wing dams and tailwaters. The baits of choice for channel catfish are shad guts/rotten shad and worms. White bass fishing continues to be fair. Anglers are also picking up a few crappies in the backwaters on jigs and minnows.

Lake Darling (Washington): Anglers are picking up a few catfish along the rocky shorelines. Look for crappies to still be out in the deeper water around the sunken trees. The water is still too cold for them to be closer to shore.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been hitting on jigs fished around brush piles in 12 to 15 feet of water. Channel catfish have been biting on cut bait and shad sides.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Walleyes are being caught near the dam in deeper water on jig and minnow combs. Bluegills and crappies have been hitting on jigs and wax worms or a chunk of night crawler at the west end of the lake. Bass are being caught over the entire lake on a variety of lures.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Water temperature at Guttenberg is 45 degrees and Bellevue is 47 degrees. River stage at Bellevue is 9.73 feet, turbid and is on a steady rise. Yellow perch are biting in the upper part of **Pools 10** (Harper's Ferry) and **11** (Guttenberg). Sauger and walleye fishing is fair in **Pools 9 to 11**. Channel catfish are starting to bite on cut baits and night crawlers in **Pools 12 to 15**. White bass fishing should improve as soon as the water conditions improve in **Pools 9 to 15**. Many walleye have moved out of the tailwater areas and are staging along the wing dams in **Pools 12 to 15**.

Cedar, Maquoketa, Turkey, Upper Iowa, and the Wapsipinicon rivers: River levels rose an average of 3 feet over the past weekend. Fishing conditions should rapidly improve throughout the week.

Big Woods Lake (Black Hawk): Anglers are catching a few crappies and bluegills fishing wax worms under a bobber.

Meyer Lake (Winnebago) and **Lake Hendricks** (Howard): The ice went out during the middle of last week and these lakes are now ready for open-water fishing.

Trout stocking began late last week and most streams are running clear. Stocking information for specific streams can be found on the web at by going through the DNR web site at www.iowadnr.com or directly to <http://www.iowadnr.com/fish/news/stockrep/groupstock.pdf>. Anglers may also call the recorded trout stocking information hotline at 563-927-5736.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

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